INDIAN COUNTRY ECHO

LEADING THE WAY

Growing the Ability to Deliver Quality Healthcare to American Indian and Alaska Native People.

Herbal Support for Harm Reduction

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Objectives

I. **Why** Herbs Make Sense in Harm Reduction
II. **How** to Use Herbs for Harm Reduction
III. **Symptom Patterns** We Can Support
IV. **Preparation**
V. **Herbs** Found in Pacific Northwest
VI. **Recommended Books**
VII. **Question and Discussion**

Why Use Herbs

Plant Medicine Is:

- Gentler support with fewer side effects
- Sustainable, long-term results
- Adjunctive – support, not replacement, for other treatments
- Easily accessible – no insurance or pharmacy needed
- A way to reconnect to land, tradition, and self

How to Use Herbs for Harm Reduction

Stimulant Dependence (*e.g., cocaine, coffee, crisis, amphetamines*)

- Exhaust adrenal gland and the nervous system
- Healing support focuses on calming the fight/flight response, soothing the nerves, and nourishing adrenal function and the spirit

Depressant Dependence (*e.g., alcohol, opioids, benzodiazepine)*

- Stalls digestive motility and dampens metabolic processes.
- Herbal support encourages gentle stimulation and movement of body and spirit

Withdrawal

- Cravings may be reduced by encouraging sweating
- Herbs traditionally used for fever (diaphoretics) can support this process

Symptoms Patterns We Can Support

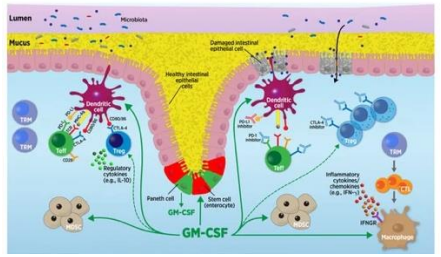
Neuropsychiatric Symptoms

- Anxiety, Irritability, Restlessness
- Depression, Anhedonia, Mood Swings
- Sleep Disturbances
- Seizures

Neuromuscular and Energy

- Fatigue, Lethargy
- Muscle Aches, Tremors

Organ System Dysfunction



- Impaired Immunity
- Impaired Kidney or Liver Function
- GI Distress (Nausea, Vomiting, Diarrhea, Constipation)

Physical Care

- Wound Care
- Oral Health

A Quick Note on Preparations

Tea

- Hot water extraction
- Use for leaves and flowers
- Extracts most polar constituents
- Therapeutic preparation = 2.5 Tbs + 1 qt. boiling water
- Steep for15 min, drink freely throughout the day
- Finish within 48 hours or discard.

Decoction

- Hot water extraction
- Use for roots, bark, some mushrooms
- Extracts most polar constituents
- Therapeutic preparation = 2.5 Tbs + 1 qt. water
- Simmer until water decreases by 1/2.
- Reconstitute with water
- Drink freely throughout the day
- Finish within 48 hours or discard

Tincture

- Alcohol Extraction
- Can adjust for polarity by adding water
- Folk method = cover herbs with EtOH for 3 weeks
- Can be more precise with math

Oil

- Non-polar constituents
- Folk method = cover herbs with oil for 3 weeks
- Can expedite with controlled heat
- Use topically or internally

Herbs: Cleavers (*Galium aparine*)

Family
Rubiaceae

Preparation
Tea or Tincture

Constituents
- Coumarins
- Iridoid Glycosides
- Tanins
  Citric Acid
- Gallotanic Acid

Parts Used
Fresh Aerial Parts in Flowering or Seed-Forming Stage

Dosage
Extract: 30-75 gtt QD - QID

Actions
- Relaxing Diuretic
- Nutritive
- Vulneary
- Hypotensive
- Lymphagogue
- Immune Supportive
- Anti-Inflammatory
- Helps Pass Catabolic Wastes

Picture

Vulnerary and lymphatic. Supports healing of ulcerated tissue—specific for mouth and throat ulcers and tumors. Reduces swollen glands, cysts, stones, and fibrocystic tissue. Soothing to bladder, kidneys, and skin (especially flexor surfaces). Traditionally used for detoxification, tissue repair, and lymphatic congestion.

Herbs: Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinalis*)

Family
Asteraceae

Preparation
Tea or Tincture

Constituents
- Inulin
- Aesculin
- Bitter Substances
- Eudesmanolides
- Germacranolides
- Triterpenes
- Sterols
- Carotenoids
- Flavonoids
- Potassium

Parts Used
Aerial Parts, Flowers, Roots

Dosage
Extract: 10-30 gtt QD - QID

Actions
- Diuretic
- Stomachic
- Mild Laxative
- Cholagogue
- Choleretic
- Antioxidant
- Anti-platelet Aggregating

Considerations
Contraindicated in bile duct obstruction, acute gall bladder inflammation or GI inflammation.

Picture

Hearty plant that survives in challenging situations. Indicated in conditions of anger, agitation, nervous and dull mind. Useful for night sweats and heat at top of head or heat without thirst. Clinically used do support hypertension, hyperlipidemia, gastric headaches and edema. Aesculin improves vascular resistance and acts as diuretic by inhibiting sodium reabsorption.

Herbs: Devil's Club (*Oplopanax horridus*)

Family
Araliaceae

Preparation
Decoction or Tincture

Constituents
- Sesquiterpenes
- Falcarindiol
- Oplopandiol
- Nerolidol
- Torreyol
- Doidene
- Bulnesol
- Dodecenol
- Cadenene
- Panaxosids

Parts Used
Roots

Dosage
Extract: 10-60 gtt QD - QID

Actions
- Adaptogen
- Immunomodulator

Picture

Indicated for adrenal burnout with physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion. Supports those who feel worn out, timid, and unable to adapt to stress. Dry mucous membranes often present. Restorative and invigorating—offers strength and protection. Traditionally used to support blood sugar regulation and manage Type 2 diabetes. Member of the ginseng family; can be used similarly to Panax and Eleutherococcus.

Herbs: Hawthorne (*Crataegus spp.*)

Family
Rosaceae

Preparation
Tea or Tincture

Constituents
- Hyperoside
- Vitexin 2" Rhamoside
- Rutin
- Oligomeric Procyanidins
- Triperpenoid Sapogenins
- Biogenic Amines

Parts Used
Flowers, Leaves, Berries

Dosage
Extract: 60-120 gtt QD - QID

Actions
- Diuretic
- Antiarrhythmic
- Astringent
- Antioxidant
- Nutritive
- Cardiotonic
- Cardioprotective
- Trophorestorative for Heart

Considerations
Can decrease need for cardiac drugs. Patients on heart medication should be closely monitored.

Picture

Indicated for nervous, irritable, or emotionally burdened heart conditions. Supports forgiveness, healing from emotional trauma, and reconnection with spirit. Specific for chronic heart issues—not for acute cases. Nourishing cardiovascular adaptogen—strengthens vessels, normalizes rhythm, and improves coronary flow. Requires long-term use (3+ months) for full effect.

Herbs: Milk Thistle(*Silybum marianum*)

Family
Asteraceae

Preparation
Tea or Tincture

Constituents
- Silymarin
- Flavo-noligans
- Silybin
- Silibininilychristin
- Silydianin

Parts Used
Seed

Dosage
Extract: 20-60 gtt QD - QID

Actions
- Antioxidant
- Hepatoprotective
- Hepatotrophorestorative
- Gastroprotectant
- Hypoglycemic
- Kidney Protective

Picture

Used to treat cirrhosis, hepatitis, fatty liver, and bile duct inflammation. Research supports liver protection and regeneration immediately after exposure to toxins but best used as protectant before exposure. Also shows kidney protective.

Herbs: Stinging Nettles(*Urtica spp.*)

Family
Urticaceae

Preparation
Tea or Tincture

Constituents
- Calcium
- Magnesium
- Potassium
- Silicic Acid
- Iron

Parts Used
Aerial Parts (BEFORE Flowering), Roots

Dosage
Extract: 10-40 gtt QD - QID

Actions
- Alterative
- Alkalinizing Diuretic
- Anti-Inflammatory

Picture

Rejuvenating spring tonic, supports immune system, circulation, urinary tract, nervous system, respiratory tract, and digestive system. Nourishes entire body in a way that allows receptivity to natural energetic flow of our spirit. High in minerals, reduces cramping. Drying, indicated for profuse discharges from mucous membranes, sensations of heat and itching.

Herbs: Milky Oats (*Avena sativa*)

Family
Poaceae

Preparation
Tea or Tincture

Constituents
- Protein
- Fiber
- Calcium
- Iron
- Manganese
- Zinc
- Silica
- Flavonoids
- Starch
- Saponins
- Alkaloids
- Steroids
- B-vitamins
- Lysine
- Methionine

Parts Used
Seeds

Dosage
Extract: 20-60 gtt QD - QID

Actions
- Nervine
- Alterative
- Sedative
- Nutritive (Especially to Nervous System)
- Cerebral Trophorestorative

Considerations
Oats antagonize the antinociceptive effect of morphine and the pressor response to nicotine.

Picture

Nourishing and soothing to nerves. Indicated in system irritation from exhaustion or stress, inability to concentrate, melancholy, diminished strength, occipital headache. Has been used for treating addictive habits like morphine, opium alcohol, nicotine, coffee, etc.

Herbs: Oregon Grape (*Mahonia spp.*)

Family
Berberidaceae

Preparation
Decoction or Tincture

Constituents
- Isoquinoline Alkaloids
- Berberine
- Berbamine
- Tannins

Considerations
Contraindicated in pregnancy due to uterine stimulation.

Parts Used
Root Bark & Stem Bark

Dosage
Extract: 10-60 gtt QD - QID

Actions
- Astringent
- Antimicrobial
- Alterative
- Vulnerary
- Anti-Inflammatory
- Cholagogue
- Choleretic
- Stomachic
- Mild Laxative
- Antioxidant
- Antitumor
- Helps Pass Catabolic Wastes

Picture
Indicated for digestive fatigue, atonic mucous membranes, and sluggish bile flow. Useful when nausea and hunger coexist, often with dull headache and visible temporal veins. Antimicrobial and astringent to GI, respiratory, and urinary tracts.
Berberine shown to triple bile secretion. Specific for low-grade, internalized heat and chronic inflammatory conditions.

Herbs: Plantain(*Plantago spp.*)

Family
Plantaginaceae

Preparation
Tea or Tincture

Constituents
- Mucilage
- Iridod Glycosides
- Tannins
- Flavonoids
- Silicic Acid
- Zinc
- Potassium
- Saponin

Parts Used
Leaf

Dosage
Extract: 15-40 gtt QD - QID

Actions
- Antiseptic
- Antibacterial
- Anti-inflammatory
- Astringent
- Diuretic
- Vulnerary

Picture

Mucilaginous fresh leaf used topically for wounds. Mouthwash of tincture + sesame oil useful for sores in the mouth. Internally supports healing of intestinal tract lining (“leaky gut”), and soothes urinary, respiratory, and digestive tracts.

Herbs: Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*)

Family

Lamiaceae

Preparation

Tea or Tincture

Constituents

- Bitter (Irioids)
- Flavonoids
- Rosmarinic Acid
- Volatile Oil
- Resin

Parts Used

Aerial Parts in Bud

Dosage

Extract: 20-40 gtt QD – QID

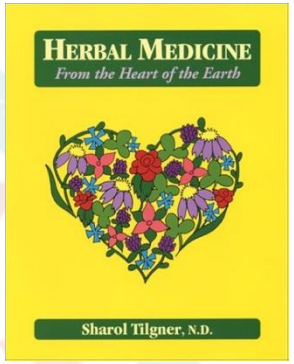
Actions

- Sedative
- Stomachic
- Antispasmodic
- Trophorestorative
- Cerebral Vasodilator
- Hypotensive
- Anti-inflammatory

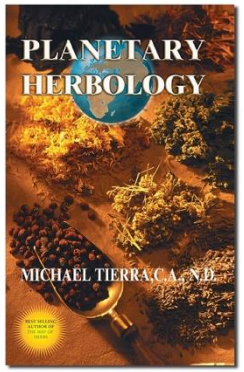
Picture

Smooths and soothes frayed nerves. Indicated for nervous fear, restless sleep, sensory hypersensitivity (light, sound, smell), cardiac irritability, and spasms. Also supports nervous indigestion, the inability to pay attention, dull frontal headache or headache at base of brain.

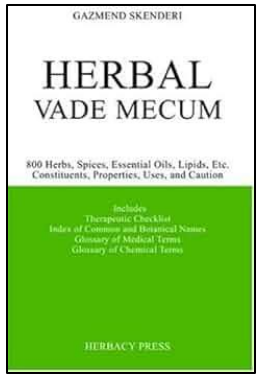
Resources



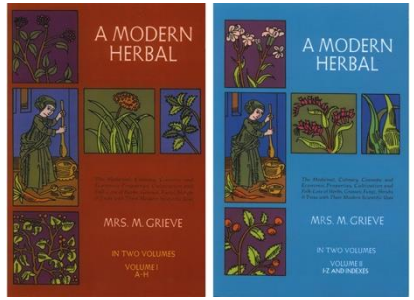
Herbal Medicine From the Heart of the Earth
Sharol Tilgner, N.D.
"The Only Herb Book You Will Ever Need"



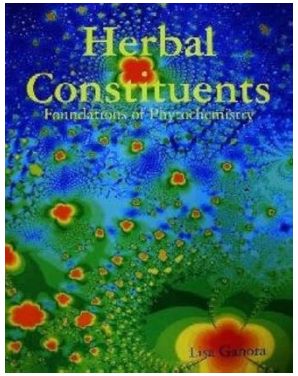
Planetary Herbology
Michael Tierra, N.D.
"Ayurvedic, Spiritual, Cross-Cultural"



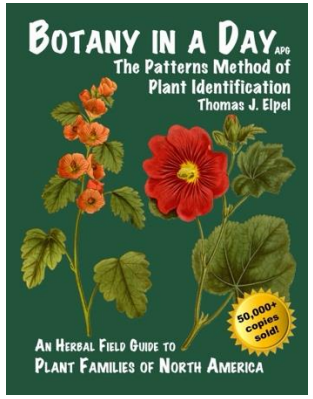
Herbal Vade Mecum
Gazmend Skenderi
"Concise Clinical Science of Western Herbs"



A Modern Herbal
Mrs. Maude Grieve
"Historical Botanical Reference and Folklore"



Herbal Constituents
Lisa Ganora
"Organic Chemistry for Medicine Making"



Botany in a Day
Thomas J. Elpel
"Quick Plant ID through Plant Family Patterns"

Your Local Botany Field Guide

Thank You!

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Visit: IndianCountryECHO.org

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